**Effective Teaching Procedures for Students with Autism**

* Pair yourself with reinforcement before intensive teaching:

“Pairing” is a strategy of connecting yourself with positive outcomes. Your value increases as the student learns that you are a provider of positive things. With new clients, spend time giving frequent reinforcement and positive verbal feedback in the absence of work requirements. Once the student begins looking to you for these things, begin introducing tasks.

* Pair the teaching environment with reinforcement:

Make locations where instruction takes place reinforcing. Avoid having separate work/reinforcement areas with no overlap. Otherwise, work areas will quickly become aversive and students will engage in behaviors to avoid or escape them. Additionally, avoid instructing in only one location. Instead, vary where instruction occurs.

* “Fade in” the number of requests/tasked the student is required to complete:

Require fewer responses before reinforcement initially, and gradually increase this number during the teaching session (based on the variable ratio (VR) you have selected for the student).

* Reduce response effort for tasks:

The more effort a behavior requires, the less likely a person will be to engage in the behavior. “Effort” includes the difficulty of the behavior, the number of steps required, and the length of time it takes for a behavior or series of behaviors to be completed. Modifying tasks to reduce this will increase performance and reduce problem behaviors.

* Use a variable ratio (VR) of reinforcement:

With this approach, reinforcement is less predictable, and increases student motivation to continue responding. Through this approach, behavior is strengthened when compared to fixed ratios where the same number of tasks are completed each time.

* Quick delivery of reinforcement:

Once you have presented the planned number of tasks/requests, reinforce immediately. Once the student is responding consistently, gradually increase the number of responses required or the amount of time in-between responses.

* Mix and vary instructional requests & activity types:

Avoid requiring students to complete the same activity or type of activity over and over (i.e., sorting). Instead, mix activities from a variety of skill areas. This variation reduces the likelihood that non-compliance will occur.

* “Fade in” the difficulty of tasks (behavioral momentum):

Begin with easier tasks/activities with fewer steps, and gradually add more difficult ones. By reinforcing successful responding on easier tasks, compliance on more difficult tasks will increase.

* Intersperse easy and difficult requests:

Begin teaching sessions with easier, mastered requests and tasks. This allows the instructor to give more frequent positive feedback and reinforcement, and reduces frustration associated with errors.

* Use the Premack Principle:

Put activities with a high probability (HP) of compliance (i.e., preferred game) after activities with a lower probability (LP) of compliance (i.e., academics, difficult/lengthy tasks). The individual is more likely to complete the LP activity in order to have access to the HP activity. Examples: “First-Then” and “If-Then”

* Reduce learner errors:

Use errorless teaching procedures with all new skills, which ensures high levels of correct responding and reduces the likelihood of non-compliance.

* Pace instruction properly:

Teaching that is more fast-paced allows for more practice for the student, quicker access to reinforcement for the student, and reduces the likelihood that non-compliance will occur.

* Latency:

Keep the time between the instruction and the student’s response 3-5 seconds. If the student does not respond within this time, provide a prompt. Be sure to do a transfer trial(s) to allow more independent responding.

* Short Inter-Trial Intervals (ITI):

An ITI is the time between the student’s response and the presentation of the next request. Keep ITI’s to fewer than 5 seconds. If this is not possible (i.e., gathering materials), provide a reinforcer for the student to utilize at the work area.